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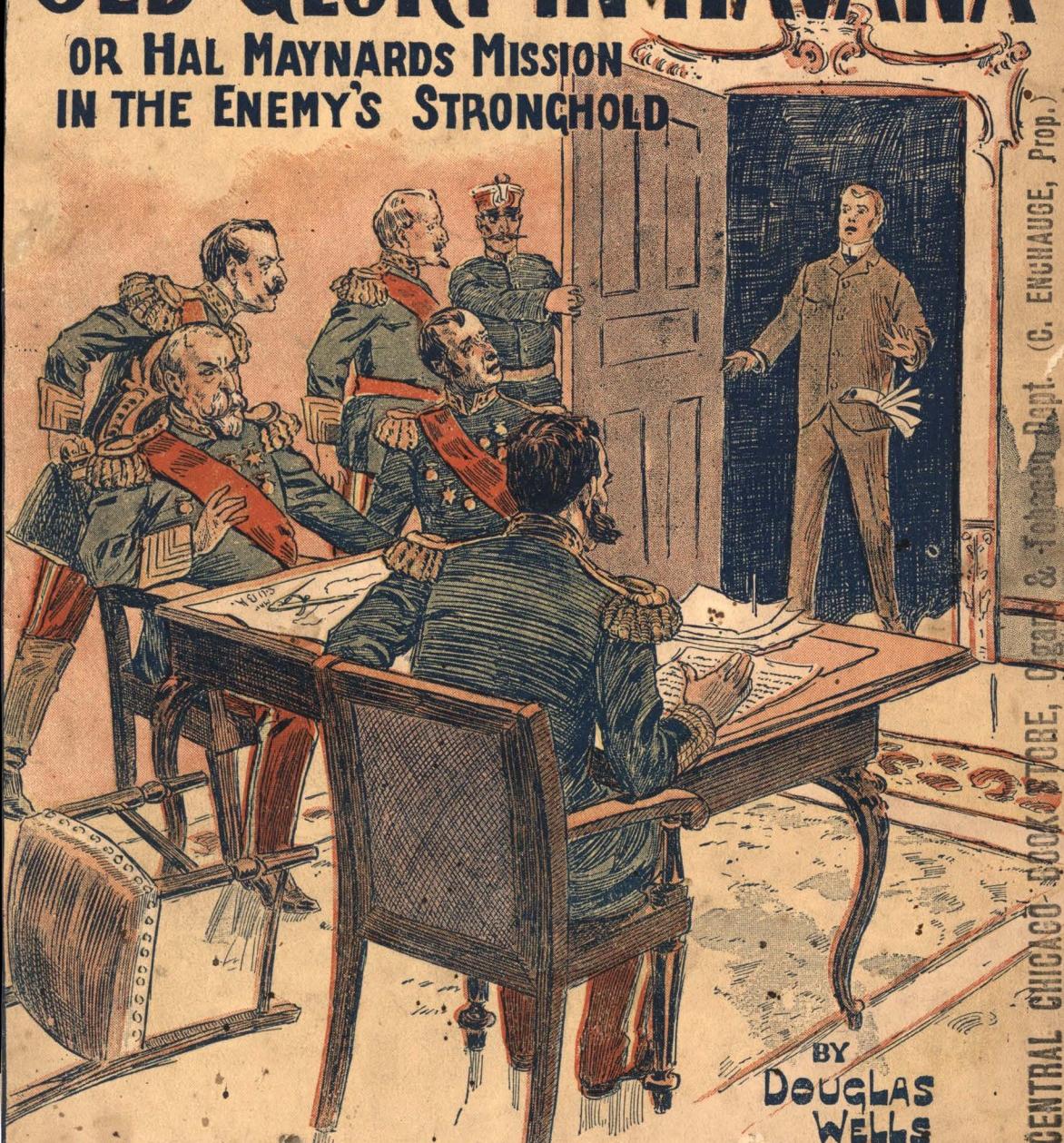
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OUR VICTORIOUS ARMY

FLAG WEEKLY

STREET & SMITH,
PUBLISHERS

OLD GLORY IN HAVANA

OR HAL MAYNARD'S MISSION
IN THE ENEMY'S STRONGHOLD



BY
Douglas Wells

LIEUTENANT HAL WAS CAUGHT IN THE VERY ACT OF WRITING DOWN SPANISH SECRETS

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NEW YORK, July 16, 1898.

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OLD GLORY IN HAVANA;

OR,

Hal Maynard's Mission in the Enemy's Stronghold.

By DOUGLAS WELLS.

First Part.

CHAPTER I.

UNDER HAVANA'S GUNS.

"This is the real thing!"

Ensign Gilroy delivered himself of this emphatic opinion as, with water pouring from his service rubber coat, he came into the ward-room of the U. S. gunboat Racer.

"Pouring, eh?" asked a young army lieutenant who sat at table opposite a Cuban, both finishing a light supper.

"Pouring isn't the word," declared Ensign Gilroy. "You'll need something stronger, Maynard. I don't envy you fellows to-night."

"Pooh," declared Lieutenant Hal Maynard, light-heartedly. "We're used to this Cuban rainy season."

"That is true," nodded the young Cuban, who was sipping opposite him.

"Well, you can have it," smiled Ensign Gilroy. "For my part I'm happy to think that my watch is off at eight bells. Whew! Just hear that Niagara coming down from the heavens! Drops as big as

the wheel-house compass! And the thunder? Sounds like a squadron in action. There'll be a hurricane, if this wind keeps up."

"Anywhere near Cojimar beach?" queried Lieutenant Hal Maynard.

"That's what I came to tell you about," responded Ensign Gilroy. "Captain sends his compliments, with the information that we're about a quarter of an hour from there."

"I've finished supper," nodded Hal.

"And I also," added Juan Ramirez, rising.

"Don't be foolish, and come out on deck before you're called," urged the ensign, turning and going out again.

"It is a frightful storm," muttered Ramirez listening to the steady beating of the rain against the closed ports.

"It's all the better for our purpose," spoke Hal, cheerfully. "On such a night as this the Spanish sentries won't be over-vigilant. It's the kind of a night when we've some show for our lives."

"If we're not drowned," hinted Juan.

"We won't be. Wind and sea have to

DO YOU LIKE DETECTIVE STORIES?

be worse than this when American jack tars can't keep a boat right side up. We've got to face this storm, soon, Juan, so let's go on deck now."

As Hal spoke, he picked up his poncho. Juan did the same, and both, with a skill born of practice, adjusted these rain-shedders.

A curious, useful thing, the poncho. Made in the shape of a blanket, the rubber from which it is fashioned helps to keep dry the man who must sleep in camp in the rainy season of Cuba.

In the middle is a slit-like hole. Through this the head may be thrust, with the ends hanging before and behind in such a way as to cover the body down to the knees.

By throwing this, cape fashion, to the side from which the rain is coming, excellent protection is furnished to him who must walk abroad in the rain.

Wearing thick canvas leggings, which come up to the knee, both young men were thus excellently protected from the deluge of rain that assailed them the instant they stepped out on the deck.

"Just the night," declared Hal, peering about him. "One can hardly see a dozen feet away. It shouldn't be a hard task to dodge a few sentries on shore."

"Except for this lightning," objected Juan, as a particularly vivid flash of tropical lightning made the whole scene about them visible for hundreds of yards.

"The lightning will be over before the rain is," responded Hal.

"Do you see where we are?" broke in Juan, as another flash of lightning burst from the sky.

"Opposite the entrance to Havana harbor."

"We shall soon be on Cuban soil," continued Ramirez.

He spoke quietly, but his friend knew that he was thrilling with the thought.

"Too bad that you are to come back to the ship," spoke Hal, sympathetically.

"No matter," retorted the Cuban, with a shrug of his shoulders. "My foot shall at least touch the land."

It was no slight duty that lay before one of the young men, Lieutenant Hal Maynard.

Our hero had received no less than an order to go ashore near Havana, make a thorough inspection of all the forts and batteries about the city, and to learn what he could about the condition of the city's garrison and other population.

Upon receiving this order from General Shafter, Maynard had gone to Key West on the steamship Mascotte.

At Key West he had found the Racer waiting for himself and Juan.

Now, just after dark, they were passing the entrance to Havana harbor.

To the eastward lay Cojimar beach, the nearest summer resort to Havana.

It was along this beach that our hero intended to make his landing.

Favored by the dark and storm, he hoped to escape the vigilance of hundreds of Spanish sentries.

Beyond lay the suburbs and then Havana itself—a city alertly guarded by one hundred and forty thousand soldiers.

"Mr. Maynard there?" called a voice from the wheel-house.

"Yes, captain."

"Will you come in here a moment?"

Hal trudged down the wet, slippery deck, stepped inside the wheel-house, and saluted Captain Winslow.

"Lieutenant, I suppose you don't care to have your landing even suspected."

"Naturally not, captain, since I don't covet the fate of a spy."

"The last lightning flash gave me a distinct view of Cojimar. The next flash may show the gunboat to the sentries."

NICK CARTER, THE TERROR OF CRIMINALS.

Does a matter of half an hour make any difference to you, lieutenant?"

"Not if haste imperils my success."

"We'll stand out to sea a bit, then," replied Captain Winslow, and, turning to the quartermaster, gave an order that swung the Racer around to the north-east.

"Captain, may I invite my friend, Captain Ramirez, inside?" asked Hal.

"Certainly; I didn't know that he was on deck with you."

Juan came in, shed his poncho and stood out of the way, not speaking a word.

The others spoke but seldom, for Winslow, running his vessel through a gale that threatened to become a hurricane, and running also without a light that would be visible from the shore, had his whole thought on the management of the gunboat.

For ten minutes he stood out to sea, then, turning, came back to the shore.

Within less than an eighth of a mile he lay the Racer to.

By this time, though the lightning had subsided, the rain still poured in torrents, while the wind was increasing in force.

"It's tough weather to go ashore in, Maynard," remarked the gunboat's captain.

"I'm all ready, sir."

"Want the boat lowered now?"

"If you please, sir."

The order was passed to Ensign Gilroy who soon had a gig in the water alongside.

Captain Winslow followed the young lieutenant out of the wheel-house.

"If you get into any trouble, Maynard," counselled the veteran, laying a hand on the boy's shoulder, "fire a shot, and if you are not too far from the beach we'll do our best to help you."

But Hal, looking the captain full in the eyes, replied, quietly:

"If I have to fire a shot at the beach, captain, help will be too late by the time it reaches me."

"God speed you, my lad!" came the fervent wish as Hal, stepping to the rail, grasped the sides of the rope ladder and swung himself over the side.

He seated himself in the stern beside the coxswain.

Juan came after him, but perched himself in the bow of the boat.

"All ready, sir?" asked the coxswain.

"All ready."

Silently the rowers gave way. Oars and rowlocks were muffled.

Juan, at his post in the bow, waved his arms to signal the oft-changing course.

In a few moments they were in the surf. Then the bottom of the boat grated on the sand.

Rising, Hal stepped rapidly forward. He paused an instant to grasp his chum's hand, and murmur:

"God bless you, Juan!"

"Do your duty," came the Cuban's response.

"Heaven helping me, I will."

Juan remained a few moments peering after the quickly-vanishing body of the friend who had gone ashore on the most dangerous work known to warfare—spying!

Then, mindful that even a faint flash of lightning might reveal the boat and thus betray the presence of Americans, Ramirez murmured softly:

"Time to push off, coxswain."

Steadily the boat receded from the shore, several times narrowly escaping capsizing.

Meanwhile, Hal Maynard, with every sense alert, threw himself at full length on the wet sand.

Not more than a hundred and fifty feet

HOW DO YOU LIKE "THE HUMAN FLY?"

ahead he made out dimly a line of cottages, formerly the summer abodes of Havana dwellers, but now deserted save when occupied by Spanish soldiers.

"Guess most of the sentries are under cover during this storm," murmured he boy.

Nevertheless, he proceeded slowly, creeping on hands and knees and frequently lying down at full length.

Before he had covered a quarter of the distance to the nearest cottage, the wisdom of his caution was proved.

Less than fifty feet away from him a figure crossed his range of vision.

Then, from the eastward came another figure.

Moving slowly, they met just before the door of the cottage.

"Sentries," quivered Hal, on the alert.

He lay closer to the ground than ever, softly burrowing into the wet sand.

"It will be more than an hour yet, comrade," growled one of the soldiers, "before we are relieved. Suppose that we force the door of this house and go inside, out of the storm. Who will be the wiser?"

"For one, the lieutenant of the guard."

"Bah! Be sure he is in a dry spot on such a night as this. For my part, I cannot see why the sentries should be posted at Cojimar on such a fearful night."

"We are here to keep the accursed Yankees from landing."

"Right," chuckled Hal, inwardly.

"Diablo! We could not see one tonight, at more than twelve paces."

"Now Heaven be thanked for that," muttered the young American spy.

"Comrade," replied the soldier who held out for duty, "I see something over there that was not there on my last trip to this point."

As he spoke, he raised his rifle, bringing it to bear on Hal!

CHAPTER II.

THE LIGHT OF HATRED.

"It does not move," muttered the other soldier, peering through the darkness.

"It will not, after I have fired," responded confidently he who had aimed.

Crack! Taking a dead sight, he pulled the trigger.

"I think you have hit it, comrade," spoke the other sentry. "Make haste and see, for we will have the cabo down on us."

He who had fired ran forward to the dark object, which did not stir.

Half way to the object the soldier stopped to cock his piece. Then he ran the rest of the distance.

"Diablo!" he growled. "My bullet pierced it—but that will not win me promotion."

Bending over he picked up the object—a poncho with a bullet hole in it.

"I would have sworn there was a man under it," murmured the soldier, disappointedly.

Then his gaze turned down to the ground, at the low hillock of sand which the poncho had covered.

"Well?" called the other sentry, through the darkness.

"Only a poncho," answered the soldier who had fired.

"But some one must have put it there."

"Perhaps some officer of the guard, trying to test our vigilance."

Swinging the poncho from his hand, the soldier slowly returned, looking decidedly puzzled.

The surmise that the cabo, or corporal, would be around proved to be quite correct. He came on the double-quick, followed by half a dozen soldiers.

"You have shot some one?"

"Only a poncho, cabo."

READ "THE GREAT DETECTIVE TRIO."

"And the fellow who was in it?"

Then followed an excited discussion, which ended in the men spreading out so as to search all the ground for a considerable distance from the house.

They found no one.

"I wonder how soon I can come down," wondered Hal Maynard.

He looked cautiously over the edge of the roof, but, though the rain was letting up, it was still too dark to see more than a few yards away.

The soldiers were still searching.

"I'll stay right here," quoth Hal, laconically, drawing his head back out of view from the ground.

How had he reached his present place of safety? It was all very simple—very easy for one who had the proper amount of grit and dash.

No sooner had he seen the two sentries come together than Hal, free of his poncho, had wriggled off slowly in the darkness.

His clothing, very similar in color to the wet sand, made it all the more possible for him to wriggle away.

He heard the shot, just as he rounded the cottage.

"The guard will be here in twenty seconds," realized the young spy.

Near him was the rain pipe running up to the gutter of the cottage roof.

It was risky, but the only thing to be done. Taking resolute hold, he quickly ascended.

Drawing himself up, he lay flat on the roof, next wriggling forward to the front part of the cottage.

Here he heard all that followed.

"I don't believe they'll find me up here," grimaced Maynard. "But when I go down—ah, that will be different!"

As he waited, the sound of voices came nearer. It was the cabo who did most of

the talking, the sentinel who had fired putting in a few words here and there.

Hal chuckled as he realized what they were saying. The cabo had accepted the belief that the poncho had belonged to some officer who had been testing the vigilance of the guard.

"I will say, in my report," laughed the cabo, "that Private Benita fired upon and wounded one rubber poncho. Then we will give that officer some trouble to find out where his poncho is. In the end he will believe that the joke is upon himself."

"That's good!" grimaced Maynard. "What a joke on the officer! Oh, these Spaniards have a rich sense of humor!"

That matter settled, the cabo marched his guard away.

Hal waited until they had gone, waited until the two sentries had paced away and back again.

During the half minute that this pair stood in front of the cottage, our hero slid down the rain-pipe at the rear, stole off a few feet and then dropped flat on his face.

It was another case of wriggling, now, but in a few minutes the young American was well away from that line of sentinels.

He encountered another, soon, but with less trouble.

Then he ran up plump against one of the sand batteries. These batteries, intrenched behind walls of sand, he had been instructed to pay particular heed to, for it was these, guarding the outer sea approaches to the harbor, which were expected to give considerable trouble to the American fleet when it should come time to enter.

Creeping close enough to hear the sentries talk when they met, Hal noted these batteries with care, noting particularly the number and size of guns which each mounted.

"NICK CARTER TO THE RESCUE," IS THE WATCHWORD.

To have moved too carefully might have been to invite capture. There are times when vim and dash succeed much better than over prudence.

It was not long before Lieutenant Maynard had, in his mind, a very good working map of these batteries.

The villages of Casa Blanca and Reglar now remained to be passed.

Hal went by close to the grim old walls of Morro Castle.

"I'd give a year's pay to get a peep in there," thought the boy, wistfully, standing just where he could get a vague glimpse through the darkness at the old gray walls.

It was out of the question, however. To attempt to enter Morro Castle at night would be worse than foolhardiness.

So he kept on until he passed Cabanas, the next of the line of huge old forts protecting the harbor of Havana.

Nor did he attempt here to get more than a distant, unsatisfying view.

Then he entered the squalid streets of these suburbs of Havana.

"Boldness for my motto," muttered the boy. "Chances are ten to one I'll be captured within the hour, so what's the use of skulking?"

Captured? Swift is the fate that befalls a spy in any country!

Here in Havana it would mean but the farce of a trial, which would be over almost before it began, without the trouble of taking evidence.

Then, with the first daylight, a victim kneeling on the ground while three soldiers, taking their places before him with the muzzles of their guns almost touching his head, would fire at the signal.

Captured? Well Hal Maynard knew what the fate would be, but he did not quiver. He had faced death too many times to dread it now.

Hence it was with the utmost boldness that he entered the nearest street.

There was little to be seen; few who had the curiosity to look at him.

With the cessation of the rain the people had come out to their doors to get a breath of even the sultry tropical air that passed over Havana.

They were wretched-looking people, starved and ragged. Children, utterly naked, played miserably about.

There were no stores open here. Food and other supplies had been seized by the military.

Before one of the houses a carriage had stopped. Its driver was even now exhibiting to his family a fare he had earned—money which he hoped would buy a loaf of bread somewhere on the morrow.

"With such good luck," sighed the Spanish jehu, "I shall put up my horse for the night. The poor beast will not live many days more."

"If you can oblige one more passenger," hinted Hal, stepping boldly up, "I will give you two pesos to drive me into the city."

"Have you the money?" cried the jehu, eagerly.

Hal produced some change, Spanish coin furnished him for this trip.

"Jump in, your excellency," cried the man, respectfully. "I would drive you all over Havana for that sum."

"I am not going very far," replied the boy.

"Where shall I take your excellency?"

"To the Tacon Theatre."

Hal spoke at random, for he had not really considered where he wanted to be put down. The Tacon Theatre, however, fronting on Central Park, would be as good a location as any from which to view affairs in Havana.

"Jump in, your excellency."

With our hero inside the carriage

"ALLEE SAME, BULLEE NICK CARTER!"

rolled away slowly. The poor horse had all it could do to move at all.

But the slow pace just suited the young spy. Glancing out through the windows of the vehicle, he got a view of Havana that he would never forget.

Soldiers there were everywhere, gaunt and hungry-looking, as if they did not average more than one meal a day. But the plain, common people, who had neither wealth nor position in the army—they were starving!

Famished men, women and children were to be seen everywhere. Scores had fallen in the streets, too weak to move. These were kicked at by soldiers passing by.

"Well, then, Cubans," jeered one of the soldiers, "why don't your friends, the Yankees, come down and feed you?"

"The Yankees will be here all too soon to please you Spaniards!" Hal muttered wrathfully to himself.

He was sick of the sights by the time that the driver set him down at the curb near the Tacon Theatre.

There were bright lights burning here, a semblance of gayety among the gayly dressed people who were passing in to see the performance, for there were still some people left in Havana who had money enough to buy some food, and something left for pleasure.

Near the door stood several dismounted soldiers of the orden publico, driving back with the butts of their muskets beggars who pleaded piteously for enough to buy a crust of bread.

Being well-dressed, and having a general air of being well-fed, Maynard had no difficulty in going through the line of soldiers.

There was still another line to be crossed. Our hero stood near the curb, among a few well-dressed people.

Two young men standing just before

him caught his eye. Though they spoke in undertones he could not help overhearing what they said.

"Well, and how do you like the secret service?" asked one of the pair.

"It is queer work for me, but"—shrugging his shoulders—"it is not so bad these times. They must at least feed me, enough to keep me on two active feet."

"You are employed to-night?"

"Decidedly. I must wait here until General Blapco comes out of the theatre. Then I must follow him in a carriage, to see that no Cuban fanatic attempts to assassinate him."

"The general went in uniform to-night, instead of in civilian dress."

"Yes; because it is said that after the performance he goes back to the palace to hold a consultation with his generals."

"So? I hope they will plan an invasion of the land of the Yankees."

"I can tell you no more. We of the secret service are expected to get information, not to spread it."

After chatting for a few minutes more the Spanish secret service agent was left alone.

"Here goes for some clear gall," determined our hero.

Stepping up to the agent, and eyeing him rather sternly, Hal whispered in Spanish:

"Are you not rather too talkative for the service to which you belong? It is not necessary to tell civilians when there is to be a council at the palace."

"I do not know you, senor," scowled the Spaniard, drawing himself up haughtily.

"Perhaps some day you will know me better," retorted Hal, lightly, then at once added cordially:

"I will not quarrel with you, my friend. You are capable, I am sure, and

discreet. I know you, even though you do not know me. But have no fear. I shall not report you."

"Report me?" reiterated the Spaniard, drawing himself up more haughtily than before.

"That was not the business on which I approached you, mi amigo. Recognizing in you one of our fraternity, I have only to add that I was paid a most handsome premium at the palace to-day, and am now looking for a comrade to drink a bottle of good claret with me."

"At eight dollars a bottle?" cried the young man.

"It matters not to one who has a pocketful of money."

"You are in great good fortune, senor," murmured the agent, enviously.

"And you will join me? You have plenty of time?"

"It will be two hours before General Blanco comes out of the theatre."

"Then lead to the nearest cafe where good wine is kept."

Overcome by Hal's cordiality, in which there was just a little condescension, the Spaniard brought his hand up to a salute, saying:

"Senor, I do not like to precede you."

"Do not let that trouble you," was Hal's smiling answer. "Though I am a little more fortunately placed than you, perhaps, still what are we after all but comrades? Be good enough to remove all restraint between us by taking my arm."

Thus they proceeded to the nearest cafe, where one of the waiters was dispatched for a bottle of wine that cost eight times as much as in peace times.

Hal was playing a desperate game, but success meant much.

Taking out his cigarette case, the Spaniard offered it with:

"Senor, will you delight me by smok-

ing one of my miserable cigarettes? They are the best that I have been able to get."

"I do not care to smoke until wine has made me cheerful, thank you."

The waiter was already in sight, carrying the coveted bottle, when Maynard became aware that he was being subjected to a scrutiny that was searching.

Turning slowly, in order not to appear too curious, Hal found the gaze of a pair of blazing eyes directed at him—eyes that snapped with hatred, and below them a mouth that displayed gleaming teeth in a smile of cruel satisfaction.

Hal was looking at his worst enemy, a man whom he had not seen for months, but who would gloat over his downfall and death.

"Rudolfo Carmago!" faltered the boy, inwardly.

CHAPTER III.

TO THE KING OF SPAIN!"

Had it not been for the deep-burned bronze on Lieutenant Maynard's face, he would have turned pale.

Carmago hated him with all the intensity of Spanish hate.

Their enmity dated back to the time when both had been employed on the same plantation. Hal had caught the fellow in some financial irregularities, and had exposed him.

Carmago had fled from the plantation to escape arrest and punishment.

Once after that they had met, and Carmago had tried to stab our hero to death, but Hal, disarming the fellow, had thrashed him into unconsciousness.

Since then Carmago had repeatedly declared that he could die happy if he could only find Maynard and drag him down with him.

Though a coward in some respects, Carmago was a fellow who would put up

a violent, desperate fight against one who had incurred his hatred.

Hal, who knew the fellow like a book, realized that the Spaniard's hour of triumph had come.

Maynard, recognized in Havana, meant but a name to give a corpse!

Hal thought swiftly, his brain teeming from the need of instant action.

Turning back to his comrade slowly as he had turned away from him, Hal laughed in a voice in which there was not a tremor.

"I am still thinking how easily I earned my prize money at the Prefatura to-day," chuckled the boy. "The chief of police said to me: 'Rezaba, you have done a wonderful piece of work. I will not say, Rezaba, that you have saved Cuba to the crown, but—'"

Breaking off, Hal shrugged his shoulders, adding lightly:

"My dear fellow, the work that brought me all this prize money was merely the result of a piece of luck, for which the credit is really due to one of the poorly paid fellows in my division."

Out of the corner of his eye Hal saw that Carmago had left his own table and was approaching them.

"If he succeeds in denouncing me," muttered Hal, "I am lost."

The waiter had just filled their glasses with the ice-cold wine.

Hal barely touched his lips to his glass, but his companion drained the other to the bottom.

"It is excellent—refreshing," smacked the thirsty agent. "Eh, señor, do you wish to speak with me?"—turning toward Carmago, who now stood within three feet of the table.

"A word in your ear, señor," replied Carmago, in a tone which, despite its courtesy, struck a chill to Hal's blood.

"Excuse me, señor," asked the agent, rising and looking at Hal.

Reaching coolly forward for one of the cigarettes and lighting it, our hero nodded.

"Señor," whispered Carmago, leading the police agent aside, "have you any idea in whose company you are?"

"Certainly."

"You are a secret police agent, are you not?"

"Certainly, and he is one of my superior officers."

"Your superior?" gasped the bewildered Carmago. "Why, that fellow is—"

"Señor Rezaba, chief of one of the divisions in the secret service."

"Señor Re—"

Carmago broke down from sheer astonishment. He had been as certain as he was of his own life that he had been looking at Hal Maynard.

Now he was told, and by a police agent, too, that the supposed Maynard was really a division chief of secret police.

Carmago felt like rubbing his eyes. The police agent was so certain, and the young American now looked at him in such a languidly indifferent way that the rascal felt himself the victim of an hallucination.

"I thank you for your courtesy, señor," was all Carmago could say, and returned to his table.

"He wanted to know who you are," murmured the police agent as Hal bent forward to refill his glass.

"Do you mean to say that you do not know who he is?" queried Hal, in a voice that implied a mild reproach.

"I—I have seen him before," hesitated the agent.

"Well, he is not a man of whom a police agent can approve," declared Hal.

"In fact, his presence here is liable to hurt the proprietor's reputation for respectability and loyalty."

"Then pardon me a moment," begged the police agent.

Rising, he made his way to the desk, whispered a few words in the ear of the proprietor, and then returned to our hero.

But almost immediately a waiter went and spoke to Carmago in an undertone. That fellow, flushing, rose and walked out of the cafe.

"He has been warned that his patronage is not wanted here," smiled the police agent.

Saying which he raised his glass and drank.

"Will you be good enough to thank the proprietor in my name?" asked Hal.

"Certainly."

"And when you come back, you will find me in yonder room. This place is too public for men in our line."

Picking up the bottle and glasses, Hal walked slowly toward the room he had indicated.

"Lucky I brought this with me," murmured the boy, setting down bottle and glasses and producing from one of his pockets a small vial.

Uncorking the vial, he let fall exactly five drops into one of the glasses, which he immediately refilled with wine.

Just as he had finished this, the police agent entered.

"You are just in time," cried Hal, cordially. "Drink!"

"Such good wine deserves a toast," protested the Spaniard.

"I might propose one."

"Do so, Señor Rezaba, by all means," begged the agent, raising his glass.

"And you will drink the one that I propose?"

"Assuredly, since I am sure it will be a loyal toast."

"Be sure that it will," answered Hal, half filling his own glass. "Here goes the wine, then, comrade, to the best toast possible—to the King of Spain!"

But Hal added to himself:

"The most unlucky and worst-thrashed urchin who ever sat on a throne!"

His companion, the police agent, drank greedily.

Hal filled his companion's glass up once more, covertly watching for the effect which he expected.

It came. His eyes became drowsy; next the police agent sank forward—collapsed.

Hal rose slowly but steadily to his feet, his eyes shining with desperate purpose.

"Now!" he thrilled.

CHAPTER IV.

AT DREAD CABANAS.

Hal's movements were swift as lightning that strikes.

While talking he had caught sight of a small pocketbook in the police agents inside coat pocket.

This the young American now possessed himself of in an instant.

The contents of the pocketbook were few; first, a few pesos in paper money, which our hero quickly thrust back into the young man's pocket.

All that was now left in the pocketbook was a card.

But it was this card which Hal had schemed to get.

It was the open sesame to all Havana! —A card signed by the chief of police of the city.

It certified that Juan Calvo was a regularly appointed agent of the secret police.

"Maynard, once he had made sure of the nature of the card, slipped the book into his own pocket and continued a swift exploration of the other's clothing.

But the card was all that he found that would be of use to him.

"Come, old chap, I'll make you as comfortable as I can," murmured Hal, bending over Calvo and raising him back to the chair.

Placing the unconscious police agent's elbows on the table, our hero next rested the young man's head upon the elbows.

It was all done in a few seconds.

Then, without hesitation, the young spy turned and walked toward the door.

As he went he passed by a mirror, caught a glimpse of his own face.

"My boy, you are Juan Calvo, police agent, to-night! Pray Heaven that no one in Havana will recognize you as Hal Maynard!"

Stepping into the main room of the cafe, he walked up to the proprietor's desk.

"A word with you," whispered Hal.

The proprietor saluted.

"No, don't do that," said Hal, half sternly. "I am not one who believes in having himself proclaimed in public places. Now, I have a request to make."

"It shall be obeyed as a law, Senor Rezaba," responded the proprietor in an earnest whisper.

"So he has heard that I am Rezaba," murmured the boy inwardly. "I must be careful not to get my two Spanish names mixed up in the same place. Decidedly, a few glasses of wine make the real Calvo too talkative."

Then went on to the proprietor:

"Do not mind the agent who is asleep in the back room. Do not disturb him, and do not allow any one else to go in there."

"It shall be as you order, senor."

"And do not mind anything he does. He may pretend to be very drunk, but shamming is a part of his business tonight."

"I understand, Senor Rezaba, and you, may trust me, for I am a loyal Spaniard."

"You have that reputation at the Prefatura," rejoined Hal.

"Ah, how you delight me, Senor Rezaba. It is unfortunate, is it not, to have a bad name at the Prefatura?"

And the proprietor smiled complacently.

The Prefatura in Havana is an institution similar to Police Headquarters in any large American city.

Similar in name, that is, but the Havana Prefatura has always been a nest of infamy.

It is here that political suspects, as well as criminals, are taken. Many a man who goes through the doors of the Prefatura fails to be seen coming out. Here much of the torture of the old Spanish inquisition still lingers, tempered with the refinement of modern cruelties.

The Prefatura has been a name to conjure with in Havana!

Miserable was the wretch who fell under its ban; happy he who knew that he stood well on the books of the Prefatura.

Senor the proprietor treated himself to one of his best cigars as Hal stepped through to the sidewalk.

"All clear for the moment; two hours to work in," realized the young spy with a thrill of exultation.

There was a carriage standing close to the curb at a little distance.

Hal hailed it, saying to the driver:

"Take me to the Cabanas fortress."

"Eh, senor?" queried the driver, who thought at first he had not heard rightly.

"You heard what I said," iterated Hal. "Drive me there quickly, too."

"Jump in, your worship," responded the driver, leaping down from the box and holding the door open, for Hal's imperious tone made the fellow believe that

his new customer was a young man of some importance.

For a wonder our hero struck a driver with good horses.

They went whirling through Havana's streets, out once more through the same suburbs, and presently drew up at one of the gates of La Cabanas.

"You will wait here for me," said Hal, to the driver, then crossed over briskly to where the gate sentinels stood.

Two of them crossed their muskets before him.

"Halt! On what business, señor!"

"Send for the sargento (sergeant) of the guard," requested Hal, imperiously.

The sargento came, but of him Hal demanded:

"Ask the lieutenant of the guard to be good enough to step here for a moment?"

"On what business, señor?"

"You idiot," exclaimed Maynard, impatiently, "I will tell him that myself."

Arrogance is the best tactics to employ when dealing with Spaniards of the lower class.

With an uncertain salute, as if he were guessing at the rank of the stranger, the sargento departed, but soon came back, followed by the lieutenant.

"If he suspects me," reflected Hal, "I'm a goner!"

Nor did the Spanish lieutenant look like a man who was to be easily fooled.

Hal braced himself for the ordeal as soon as he saw the officer's snapping eyes fastened upon him.

"You sent for me, señor."

"Yes, lieutenant; I ask for a few words with you apart."

"Precede me, then, if you please," was the answer, as the officer indicated the guard house.

Hal's heart began to beat decidedly faster than usual. If the approaching

ordeal resulted badly for him, fate held no hope in store.

The officer's manner was not cordial enough to be encouraging.

Waiting for Hal to precede him into the guard house, he turned to look inquiringly at our hero.

"Now, señor, your business with me?"

"I have received some peculiar orders from the chief of police."

The light in the watchful Spanish officer's eyes became even more suspicious.

"I have been stupid," went on Hal, coolly, "not to sooner introduce myself to you. I am Señor Calvo."

"You have your credentials?"

"Oh, yes, certainly."

"Be good enough to let me see them."

With the utmost readiness Hal drew out his pocketbook, opened it, and produced the card.

The lieutenant carefully scanned the pasteboard.

Next, stepping over to a desk he touched a bell. A cabo, or corporal, entered.

"Cabo," directed the lieutenant of the guard, "take this card to the comandante."

Saluting, the cabo went out, taking with him the bit of pasteboard which it had cost our hero so much scheming to get hold of.

In an instant the lieutenant turned to our hero. His manner was a trifle more friendly as he went on:

"Señor Calvo, you were speaking of peculiar business. Will you explain it?"

"Certainly," replied Hal, "as far as I am at liberty to explain."

"I am listening."

"The chief requires me to look through and ascertain if a certain man is here in Cabanas."

"A prisoner, do you mean?" asked the lieutenant, frowning.

It would never do to say yes to this question, as Maynard had the quick good sense to realize, for the chief of police was sure to have a list of all the prisoners in La Cabanas in whom he had any interest.

So Hal answered:

"No."

"A man in the military service? If so, I can quickly answer as to any name you mention, Senor Calvo. I have the name of every soldier of Spain who is stationed here."

As the lieutenant spoke, he tapped a roster book with one hand.

"I cannot tell you the name of the man I seek, nor why I seek him. I can only say, lieutenant, that I am not here to make an arrest. Beyond that my orders forbid me to say a word."

Hal spoke boldly now. Plainly the lieutenant was inclined to be suspicious. Only boldness could win the day.

To our hero's surprise, the officer began to write.

Hal's heart jumped. How he would like to see what words were forming on that page.

"You have no written instructions from the chief of police?" asked the officer of the guard, looking suddenly up.

"None."

That was as much as Hal judged it safe to say by way of reply.

The lieutenant went on writing.

A moment later the cabo entered.

"Well?" asked the officer.

"El commandante says he has caused his adjutant to look up Senor Calvo's name. It appears on the list of police agents."

With which the cabo, laying Hal's purloined card on the desk, saluted and went out.

"Shall I take my credentials?" asked Hal, leaning forward.

"Not yet, if you please, senor."

What did this delay mean?

Hal Maynard began to feel that he had made a mess of it by carrying his scheme too far.

Writing busily for a few minutes, the lieutenant of the guard once more touched his bell, and said, as the cabo came in:

"You will stay here until I return. And you also, Senor Calvo, if you please."

Hal's heart began to beat a trifle faster still.

"May I ask the cause of this delay, lieutenant?"

"It is a mere matter of form, Senor Calvo. Since you brought no written instructions, I am merely telephoning to the Prefatura to find if your instructions are sanctioned."

"Is that all?" gasped Hal, inwardly, as the lieutenant left the room. "If he telephones the Prefatura, I may as well say good-by to life at once!"

There was only the cabo in the room besides himself, and the cabo was an utterly insignificant fellow.

It would be an easy matter to jump upon him, but beyond there was the gate and a whole guard squad stationed there.

It was a hopeless case. Quivering inwardly, Hal waited.

Tick-tock! tick! sounded the clock, as if doling out the last hours of life.

Finally the lieutenant returned to the room.

Looking straight ahead he walked to his desk.

"Cabo, call the sargento."

The sergeant, being outside, entered at once.

"Sargento," said the lieutenant of the guard, in a tone that sent Hal's heart away down into his boots, "the senor will accompany you!"

Second Part.

CHAPTER V.

DENOUNCED!

"The telephone did the business," murmured Hal, inwardly.

To be a prisoner in Cabanas was decidedly the worst fate that could befall one in Havana.

For Cabanas was already overcrowded.

Every day more prisoners were brought there. Since troopships could no longer transport the surplus to the penal colony at Ceuta, there was but one means of making room for more prisoners.

As often as became necessary the prisoners were turned out of their cells, and made to draw slips of paper from a hat.

Some of the slips were blank. On others were written, "to be shot."

While those who drew blanks in the lottery of life and death were returned to their cells, those who found "fusilai" written on their blanks were shot in the prison yard for the edification of the bloodthirsty Havana mob.

Even in this moment, however, Hal's assurance did not desert him.

Eyeing the lieutenant smilingly, he said:

"I thank you, senor, for the great amount of trouble you have taken so good-naturedly on my account."

"Not so quickly," growled the Spanish sergeant. "Senor lieutenant, where is the senor to accompany me?"

"To whatever part of the castle he desires to go. He is to do whatever he pleases, sergeant, and you are to go with him merely to keep him from being annoyed by sentries. Those are my orders."

Maynard heard this with a temptation to gasp. The warm life blood, turned to ice for an instant, now coursed through his veins.

He had misunderstood the lieutenant's order, then? He was not a prisoner!

"I am sorry to have detained you so long, senor," went on the lieutenant, "but you will understand how necessary it was for me to ascertain your standing and orders from headquarters."

"I understand perfectly, senor," murmured Hal, who didn't understand at all. "The response from police headquarters was wholly satisfactory?"

"Sufficiently so, senor. The chief was not at his office, but your division chief replied that he knew the chief had sent for you and given you very important orders. So we are satisfied, for it was a mere matter of form."

"And I am at Senor Calvo's disposal," hinted the sergeant.

"Lead the way, sargento," desired Hal.

He found himself once more in the prison yard, a free man where he had feared to be a captive.

"You will look through the cells, senor?" questioned the sergeant.

"By no means. We of the police know quite well who is there. Lead me where I can see every man of the guard. Afterward, if necessary, we will go through the quarters of the soldiers."

"Si, senor."

"Oh, this is great," glowed the young spy, as the sergeant, acting under his instructions, took him past every guard post.

The guards were posted at every point of importance. In twenty minutes our hero saw every gun that was mounted in La Cabanas—took in every respect in which the defenses had been strengthened for the coming attack by the American fleet.

And Hal's memory was perfect. Once outside, away from prying eyes, he would

YOU'RE NOT IN IT IF YOU DON'T READ ABOUT NICK CARTER.

be able to reproduce truthfully on paper the state of the fort's defenses.

"Have you seen what you came to see, senor?" asked the sergeant, when they had finished the rounds out of doors.

"It is not permitted to me, sargento, to answer you yes or no."

"But your instructions?"

"Take me through the quarters of the soldiers."

Bowing, the sergeant led the way.

This took them but five minutes, the soldiers looking on curiously as our hero, led by the sergeant of the guard, passed through the squalid rooms where their filthy berths stood tier over tier.

They came out into fresh air again. Hal breathed more easily both mentally and physically, now that he was out of the tainted air and free to depart from that grim, dread place, La Cabanas.

But suddenly he bethought himself of the card which certified to his being a police agent.

"I must return to the lieutenant for my card," he explained.

The sergeant led the way into the guard-house office. Maynard found the lieutenant in much the same cool mood.

"My card, if you please, lieutenant."

"Here it is. And your search?"

"Not successful. I find I must visit Morro."

"That is soon done, Senor Calvo"

For Hal, now apparently safely out of one scrape, was resolved to take his life into his hands once more. He would try to visit Morro Castle just as he had done the Cabanas.

"Risky, but the game's worth the risk," he muttered.

To visit Morro was all well enough, if the same obliging official at Police Headquarters would again vouch for Senor Calvo.

But if some one else answered the telephone—if a doubt were raised—

These thoughts went chasing each other through Hal's brain.

"I'll do it, happen what may," he determined.

Happily the lieutenant came to his relief.

"Senor, as a matter of form, it was necessary for me to delay you when you came here. I trust to make amends for that now, by saving you more trouble. The sargento shall go with you to Morro, and there, with my compliments, assure the lieutenant of the guard there that I have word you are to be treated with every courtesy."

"Mil gracias!" (a thousand thanks) was Hal's smiling acknowledgment.

Followed by the sergeant, who conducted him safely past the outer guard, our hero felt as if he were treading on air.

Great changes had been made in both Cabanas and Morro. Each was a hundred per cent. stronger than at the declaration of war.

Reliable plans of both the ancient, but still formidable fortress would prove of the greatest value to Uncle Sam.

Hal had the plans of one fixed in his mind.

All was now to be made clear to him to inspect the other.

"Things are coming my way tonight," he chuckled, nor was it any wonder he felt that way.

Separated from Cabanas by hardly more than a narrow alley stood grim old Morro, the most celebrated—the most infamous—fort in all Cuba.

And the sergeant, by whispering barely a few words to the sargento of Morro's guard, piloted our hero past the new sentries conducting him as far as the office in the guard house.

"Lieutenant Espinola," said the ser-

geant, "this is Señor Calvo, a police agent."

"Santa Maria!" laughed Espinola. "I trust that he has no business with me that will prove unpleasant to me."

"Let me assure you that I haven't," responded Maynard, as he grasped the hand that this laughing officer, so different in every way from the other lieutenant, held out to him.

"I breathe again," sighed Espinola, with a mock-seriousness that forced Hal, shamming as he was, to laugh.

Hal briefly stated his business as he had stated it a half an hour before at La Cabanas.

Espinola, on hearing the pretended agent so vouched for, was all courtesy.

He called in his own sargento at once. The whole affair happened so swiftly that Hal, before he realized it, was inspecting the choicest defense secrets of Havana's greatest fort.

"Now for only five minutes by myself!" thrilled the boy. "All I need is one chance to jot down some notes from which I can draw a map at my leisure in the ward-room of the Racer."

Pretending to scrutinize severely the last half dozen sentries whom they passed, he turned to the sergeant as they descended from the walls to the courtyard, and murmured:

"Sargento, it will not be necessary for me to go through the quarters of the soldiers here."

"Ah! Then you have seen him whom you came to see?"

"To ask anything would be indiscreet," replied Maynard, giving the fellow a look that caused the latter to become instantly silent, for not even the military in Havana cared to offend the busy police agents who spied in every corner of the city and then babbled damagingly at the Prefatura.

"I trust the señor does not censure me, ventured the sargento, at last.

"You have said nothing," was Hal's reassuring reply.

Together they paced across the yard. They were now within ten feet of the gate—almost within arms reach of the sentries who alone barred the way to freedom.

"I've got the plans of both forts," thought Hal, with another thrill of exultation. "Now, only the light task of looking over the sand batteries on the west shore and my work is through."

"Turn out for Lieutenant Carranza!" shouted the cabo.

Instantly the guard formed in two lines, the soldiers presenting arms as a young officer passed them in coming in.

By chance, merely, Carranza caught a good glimpse of Hal's face.

He started, leaped forward a pace or two, and peered searchingly into the young American's eyes.

"Great Scott!" palpitated Maynard, feeling creepy all over.

For he recognized this young officer, whose name he had not before known, as a soldier with whom he had crossed swords in the field while fighting under General Betancourt.

And just as surely Carranza recognized him.

"Guard! Halt this fellow!" roared the lieutenant.

Still dumfounded, Hal seemed incapable of motion as the sentries crossed their rifles, barring his way out.

"Arrest him!" cried Carranza, crisply.

"But, señor lieutenant—" began the puzzled sargento, expostulatingly.

"Silence, sergeant," ordered Carranza, hotly. "I know this fellow. He is a Cuban—an American—what you will—but all the same a spy!"

CHAPTER VI.

TO THE COUNCIL.

"A spy," faltered the sergeant.

"Yes, a spy," reiterated Lieutenant Carranza.

"That is right," added another voice, Espinola's. "I have known it all along."

"And you have not ordered him under arrest?" cried Carranza in astonishment.

"Not I."

"And you were allowing him to pass out by the last sentries?"

"Come here a moment, my dear Carranza," requested Espinola, with a smile.

Hal, speechless but watchful, took in the drama that should decide his fate.

He saw much at a glance.

Espinola and Carranza were enemies. Both undoubtedly loyal to Spain, each would rejoice at the other's annoyance.

Carranza's tone implied that he believed the lieutenant of the guard deserving of rebuke for negligence of duty.

Espinola, on the other hand, was one who could relish the privilege of laughing at a beaten foe.

You knew, and let him go?" demanded Carranza, as if he could not believe his ears.

"Truly."

"And what has he been doing here?"

"Looking over the fort."

"You allowed a spy to do that, and then you were about to permit him to go unmolested!"

"Yes," replied Espinola, with his most provoking smile.

Carranza was utterly dumfounded, but he quickly began to suspect that there was some trap in the other's mirth.

"Will you explain, my dear fellow?"

"Certainly, Carranza. This young man is a spy, but one who is permitted tonight to roam at will through this stronghold. To be more explicit, he is a

police spy, accredited by the Prefatura, and acting under orders that I cannot question."

"But I tell you that I have seen this fellow serving in the Cuban ranks. My sword has crossed with his machete. Tonight is not the first time that I have looked into his eyes, and he is a young man whose face is not likely to be forgotten."

"That is quite true," assented Espinola, letting his glance wander in Hal's direction.

Our hero stood motionless and silent, glancing carelessly at the two officers.

He could not hear what they were saying, but Carranza's gestures were sufficient to show that he at least was in earnest.

"Why do you doubt me, eh?" demanded Carranza, with just a trace of haughtiness in his tone.

"By no means," said Espinola, promptly.

"You believe me, when I say that I have seen yonder prisoner serving with the Cubans?"

"I accept your word implicitly."

"And you will have him taken to the guard house, and detained there until the commandante can question him tomorrow?"

"No," retorted Espinola, "I shall do nothing of the sort. See here, Carranza, why make yourself ridiculous? What does it matter to us whether this fellow ever served with the insurgents. Thieves are often set to trap thieves. Is it impossible that the government should find a rebel and employ him to catch other rebels? Now this young man has his card as a police agent. He went first to La Cabanas, where he stated his business, and Lieutenant Lajita went to the trouble to telephone to the Prefatura, from which office he receive word that Señor Calvo's

business was of the utmost importance, and that every facility was to be afforded him."

From this it will be seen that Lieutenant Espinola repeated rather more than he heard, but to one of his temperament, under the circumstances, that was natural.

Carranza looked puzzled, a good deal crestfallen.

"Of course, if that is the case——" he began.

"I assure you that it is. Surely, Carranza, you will permit the secret police to know its own business?"

"I have nothing more to say," replied the lieutenant, with a good deal of venom in his tone. "I only hope, Espinola, that you have not made a mistake."

"The mistake, if one there is," replied Morro's lieutenant of the guard, "is with the chief of police, who telephoned that this Calvo was all right; and not to be interfered with. And, between ourselves, Carranza, I think the chief of police quite important enough a personage to shoulder his own mistakes."

"Oh, certainly," rejoined Carranza, red in the face with mortification, for he knew that his enemy was laughing at him.

Turning to the sentries, the lieutenant of the guard cried out:

"Men, you will not detain the señor."

Then, striding forward, Espinola placed his hand in our hero's.

"Señor Calvo, you have my apologies for what has happened. At the same time, I hope you will bear in mind that it was not my fault."

"No man is to be censured for doing what is his duty," was cheeky Hal's answer. "Therefore I have no quarrel with even Lieutenant Carranza."

Which dialogue caused Carranza to grind his teeth all the more.

"Men," went on Espinola, as if he delighted to "rub it in" to his enemy,

"you will permit Señor Calvo to pass either in or out, unquestioned, as long as you remain on guard."

Pausing only to salute the lieutenant of the guard, a courtesy which was graciously returned, Hal strode quickly away.

"Poor Espinola! He's really a good fellow," muttered the boy. "For his sake, I hope it will never be discovered what my real business was here to-night."

Up under the deep shadow of Cabanas our hero saw a waiting cab.

"Another poor devil come to his door most likely," murmured Hal, with thrill of gratitude to Heaven for his own miraculous escapes.

But as he drew nearer he could hardly repress a cry of pleasure.

For it was his own jehu, the one who had driven him out from Havana, who now jumped down from the box.

"I was almost certain," said the driver, "that your worship would want to ride back to the city."

"You thought rightly, and for that you shall have the price of an extra drink, mi muchacho. Now, drive me with all speed to the Theatre Tacon, Parque Centrale."

The cab did not jolt sufficiently to prevent our hero from jotting down several notes as to the defenses of Cabanas and Morro, nor did he forget to make memorandum of the sand batteries and guard coast lines on Cojimar beach.

By the time this was done the carriage was turning into the well-lighted streets of Havana proper.

Though there might be no prying eyes, it was not safe to take chances.

Bending down, our hero untied one of his shoes, contorting his face with an expression of pain.

The shoe off, he shook it out of the window, as if trying to dislodge an annoying pebble.

Then he felt inside, as if to ascertain whether it was removed.

But while doing so, he contrived to lay his notes in the bottom of his shoe.

This done, he replaced the shoe.

"At the Parque Centrale," he murmured, "I will dismiss this driver, wander away two or three blocks, get another driver, and go out to the beach on the west shore, inspect the Santa Clara and Reina forts and the sand batteries, and then get back with all speed to the Racer. This has been a perilous, but a glorious night!"

Stepping out of the carriage, therefore, at the Theatre Tacon he started along the sidewalk.

Along the sidewalk, some of them seated on the curb, lounged eight mounted and fifty dismounted men of the orden publico—soldiers, but the nearest approach to police that Havana enjoys.

"They are waiting for Blanco," muttered Hal.

He stopped short, thrilling in every nerve, for another scheme—the most desperate of all—had just popped into his mind.

But it went helter-skelter out in another moment, for the unexpected had happened.

The door of a near-by cafe opened—the real Calvo came out!

"Murder's out!" gasped Hal.

This time a denunciation would not be likely to be so easily disposed of as it had been at Morro Castle.

He would be held pending an investigation—an investigation that could result only in one way.

But the boy's audacity was by no means yet gone.

"Calvo, my dear friend," he murmured, in the real police agent's ear, "I was coming back to find you."

Senor Calvo turned on him a pair of eyes that were still half dreamy.

"Oh—it—is—you—Senor Rezaba?" replied Calvo, slowly. "Do you know, senor, I am not feeling well. I was stupid enough to take a nap. My head feels dull."

"You are in rather bad shape," said Maynard, in a whisper. "Don't let any one see it. I'll pull you through all right. Come with me."

"But, General Blanco? He will—soon come out?"

"Not for more than ten minutes yet," Hal assured him, on tenterhooks of nervous suspense. "You have plenty of time, Senor Calvo. Come with me, and I will soon fix you all right."

"But I must be out here when General Blanco leaves the theatre. You understand, Senor Rezaba, that I have never seen him before. Therefore, I must see the man whom the soldiers salute, in order not to make any mistake."

"But you will make a mistake," retorted Hal, with visible impatience, "if you don't come back into the cafe and let me fix you up so that your drowsiness won't be noticed."

"You are my friend?"

"Can you doubt it?" queried Hal, with what the other took for cordiality.

Calvo, even in the muddled condition that he found himself, must have been a trifle suspicious, for he hung back reluctantly.

Once more Hal took the bull by the horns.

"See here, Calvo," he said, sharply. "I am trying to do you a service, for I have taken a liking to you. But if you don't show more appreciation, I shall drop you at once. Then what will our division chief say to you when it is reported to him that you took a few glasses of wine, which overcame you, and un-

fitted you for duty? You will be dismissed from the secret police. Now, confound you, come along whether you will or not."

And Hal, without more ado, fairly dragged him to the door of the cafe.

Calvo, realizing that he was in the hands of one more masterful than himself, and glad to lean on some one else for support, now went along without more objection.

Senor the proprietor of the cafe saw them coming, and bowed most cordially to that very clever Senor Rezaba.

"Come into the closet in a moment," whispered Hal, in Spanish, as he passed the desk.

Hardly had he seated Calvo in a chair and rested his head on the table, when the proprietor followed them in.

"Bring me a glass of brandy," said Hal, and the proprietor served him in person.

Taking out his vial once more, Lieutenant Maynard poured from it seven drops into the brandy as soon as the proprietor had discreetly retired.

"Here, drink this," he urged, bending over the befogged police agent and raising his head.

"What is it?" asked Calvo, and once more a suspicion rang in his voice.

"It is all right," insisted Hal, sternly. "One of my own remedies. Drink it down, or I will leave you to your fate—disgrace."

He fairly forced the liquid between the Spaniard's lips, and made him drain it to the last drop.

Setting the glass on the table, our hero held his victim's head, watching his eyes.

"How do you feel now?" asked Hal.

"Better," muttered the police agent, thickly. "Diablo, no, confound you, my head is going round and——"

"You will be all right in a moment," said Hal, soothingly.

Senor Calvo shook, as if making an effort of will that his bodily strength was not equal to.

"Confound—you—"

"Calvo's head fell forward with a thump. He was done for.

"Settled!" clicked Hal. "And now for real business!"

Leaving the room, being careful to pull the door tightly to, Maynard hurried out to the desk.

"You know my friend?" asked our hero.

"Calvo?" inquired the proprietor. "Yes, for time—since he was a boy, in fact."

"Does he not act his part excellently?"

"One would almost think he was drunk, or drugged," replied the proprietor.

"He is an excellent actor. Do you like Calvo?"

"Si, señor, I am fond of little Calvo."

"Then you will be glad to know that, if he acts his part well to-night he is to be promoted."

Senor the proprietor looked mightily puzzled, as if he would like to know how little Calvo could help the service by making a pretense that was apparently so purposeless.

But senor the proprietor also knew the folly and uselessness of asking impertinent questions of police officials so powerful as these of Havana.

Instead, swallowing his inquisitiveness, he pushed a box of his best cigars toward our hero, asking:

"Will Senor Rezaba smoke?"

Though Hal seldom smoked, he accepted a cigar. Then, remembering that he was impersonating a Spanish official, he helped himself to as many as he could place in his pockets without crowding.

If señor the proprietor regretted his generosity, he did not permit himself to show it.

Bowing his thanks, the American spy stepped through the doorway just in time to hear a bugler sounding the assembly.

In line before the door of the Theatre Tacon the dismounted men of the orden publico were forming.

Hal looked swiftly about him, saw his jehu, and ran to him.

"You are in excellent luck to-night, mi muchacho," he cried. "I shall need you once more. Do you see General Blanco's carriage there? When it leaves the theatre, follow it, keeping just behind the orden publico who will escort him."

"But, señor, I may get myself into trouble."

"How, by serving the police?"

The jehu nodded his head now, for he began to understand the previous drive on which he had taken his fare.

"I understand the señor," replied the Spaniard, smiling.

There was another flourish of trumpets. The soldiers presented arms as, ahead of all the other theatre-goers, out from the state box came Captain-General Blanco, leaning on the arm of his military secretary.

This pair got into the waiting carriage; the mounted men of the orden publico started ahead, while the dismounted men formed in fours at the rear.

Away went the captain-general's carriage; behind, separated by only fifty marching men, rode Hal Maynard in a second carriage, a part of the procession.

And that daring American youngster was exultingly murmuring under his breath:

"Now, to the captain-general's council!"

CHAPTER VII.

BEAUTY IN DIRE PERIL.

Had Hal Maynard gone suddenly mad?

No! But he had dared so much on this night, had already achieved so much greater results than he had dared to hope for that he was now determined to win all or lose all.

"I'll take back all the news there is in Havana, or get shot for trying," thought Maynard, grimly.

The horses of the carriage in which he sat trotted just behind the platoon of the orden publico.

People on the sidewalks knew, or thought they knew, that this young occupant of the carriage was a police agent following the captain-general home according to custom.

On his way to the palace Hal had a little time to mature his plans.

He determined only to keep his eyes and ears open, and trust as much as need be to favoring circumstances.

He noted little of the way as he rolled through the streets on the way to the palace.

At every opportunity that he got he was watching General Blanco and his military secretary.

But at last the carriage turned through the Plaza de Armas.

Hal roused himself to instant observation.

There was hard, dangerous, gallant, clever work ahead to be done now.

Captain-General Blanco's carriage drew up at the steps of the main entrance.

Between two files of drawn up palace guards Blanco and his aide passed inside.

Hal's own driver halted some yards from the steps, but our hero sprang lightly out, and, after tossing a coin to the driver, started unconcernedly up the palace steps.

"Halt!"

It was the officer of the palace guard who now stood in our hero's path.

To him Hal murmured "Agent of police," and made the first move to bring out his credential card.

But the officer merely said:

"It is well. Proceed!"

Hal thereupon went into the long, wide corridor, through knots and groups of Spanish officers in their neat, cool uniforms of blue and white striped linen.

They wasted hardly a glance upon the boy. He was not of the military, but belonged to the police, which the officers of the palace affected to despise.

Looking ahead, Hal saw the retreating figures of the general and his aide.

They were turning at the grand staircase, ascending the broad steps.

Arrived on the next landing, they went a few yards down the corridor, turning into the nearest room of the audience suite.

Here, though very slowly, Hal followed them.

But at the door he was confronted by a colonel, who curtly demanded his business.

"The agent of police who followed his excellency from the Theatre Tacon," explained Hal, glibly.

"Your credentials?"

"Here is the card."

This colonel was plainly not of the kind who would take a stranger's word for anything. He scrutinized Hal's purloined card sharply, but could find no fault with it, and handed it back, saying:

"Your duty ended at the palace entrance, did it not, Senor Calvo?"

"I understand differently," was Hal's ready retort.

"Ah! Then you are to accompany his excellency again when he leaves here after the council?" whispered the colonel.

"Quien sabe?" (who knows?) asked Hal shrugging his shoulders and looking wise.

"You need not be afraid to trust me with your instructions," rejoined the colonel, with a slight frown. "But I will tell you something, senor, that may be of use to you. When General Blanco leaves here he goes through the door at the rear of the palace—the one opposite the

chapel, you understand? One of his own conveyances is already there awaiting the order."

"Many thanks, señor colonel," murmured Hal, "though I already knew as much from my chief at the Prefatura."

"So?" muttered the colonel, starting slightly. "My friend, I imagine the captain-general would think, if he heard that, that the men at the Prefatura know a little too much. But pass inside if you have business."

If he had business? Hal Maynard, bent on learning all the secrets he could use for Uncle Sam, rather thought he had business inside!

General Blanco was no longer in sight, but as Hal now had free access to all of the long line of brilliantly-lighted, connecting rooms, that thought annoyed him but little.

"I'll find the general, though," murmured the boy, stepping into the second room of the suite.

Here were only a half a dozen of the younger Spanish officers. They stared at Hal, but did not appear to think him worthy of a bow.

Stepping into the door of the third room, Hal heard a sob.

Amid all the life and gayety at the palace this note struck a chill to his exuberant spirits.

Looking swiftly about, he saw a girl seated on a divan, her head bent forward in her hands.

He could not resist the impulse to go up to her.

"You are in trouble, señorita?" he asked, gently.

The girl started, looked up in alarm, and rose to her feet.

Beautiful as many of the Cuban girls are, Hal was struck with surprise by the great loveliness of this one.

Her startled eyes gazed appealingly into his own.

"I came to plead with the captain-general for my brother," she faltered. "I spoke to the captain-general just now as he passed. My brother was arrested today. He is at the Cabanas, sentenced to be shot at sunrise, but the captain-general repulsed me, telling me harshly to go to the chief of police. But the chief of

police will be in bed, and will refuse to be disturbed. Besides, the chief has not the pardoning power. And my brother will be shot!"

"Poor girl!" said Hal, sorrowfully.

The genuine sympathy in his tone struck her with the true ring.

"You are sorry for me—really sorry?" she cried, resting one little hand on his arm.

"More sorry than even your wistful heart would believe," spoke Hal, brokenly.

"You are one of the officials here, perhaps?" she questioned, in a sweet, low, eager tone.

"I am only—"

Impulsive Hal paused. He must not trust his secret even with this girl, though Heaven's truth and honesty shone in her black eyes.

"Only an agent of police," he added, slowly.

"The police!"

She shrank back from him with a movement of horror.

"It was the police who took my brother to Cabanas," she glared. "The police who denounced him—the police who are to be responsible for his death. But yet," with the pleading look coming back to her eyes, "you said you were sorry for me, and if there is one truthful Spaniard alive, señor, I believe it is you."

The distracted girl's confidence in him touched Hal more deeply than he could have explained to her.

"I am your friend," he said, earnestly. "I would help you if I could, but I cannot."

"But you can advise me?"

"All I can suggest is—stay at the palace all night, if necessary. General Blanco alone has the power to pardon your brother. See the captain-general—wring the pardon from him. Adios, señorita, and may God help you, as I believe he will!"

As Hal pressed her hand and moved away, the Cuban girl sank back on the divan. Her tears were dried. A new light of confidence and hope shone in her eyes.

"Poor girl!" muttered Hal, once more, and a big sob choked in his throat.

He stepped into the next room, took a

look about him, and had hardly done so when he heard a jovial voice exclaim:

"La Señorita Isabella Varome? Oh, señorita, you will never guess how long I have sought for you! And here you are, in all your loveliness. Now, you shall give me that embrace—that kiss—I have begged for before."

"Stand back, you dastard!" rang the Cuban girl's horrified voice.

"Remember, señorita," cried the young Spaniard, warningly, "that where I begged before I can command now. You shall come to my home—be mine altogether henceforth. Remember, I can obtain General Blanco's order to that effect, if needed. Now, I lay my lips upon yours!"

Hal, getting a point of vantage from which he could see without much danger of being seen, looked on with blazing eyes as he saw the young Spaniard make a spring toward the shrinking girl.

"By thunder! he shan't do that!" quivered Hal Maynard.

And next came the palpitating resolve:

"I'll save the señorita from that dastard if its the last thing I do before I'm hung!"

Third Part.

CHAPTER VIII.

SIGNED BY BLANCO.

When he saw innocent girlhood in the clutch of such a brute as this Spanish officer, Hal Maynard was ready to throw the last shred of prudence to the winds.

Instinctively his hand flew to where his revolver was concealed.

"Lieutenant Passos," came from the next room, and the words were bravely spoken, "keep away from me. Do you see what I have here in my hand!"

As the girl held up her right hand, a tiny stiletto glistened in it.

"Bah!" jeered the lieutenant, "do you think I am afraid of that? The sword is my profession, my pretty one."

Nevertheless, as the girl had eluded him, the lieutenant now stood smiling at her, prepared in an instant to leap at her,

HOW A DETECTIVE IS TRAINED.

wrest away the knife, and carry out his purpose of kissing her.

"The knife is not for you, Lieutenant Passos," raged the scornful girl. "A bullet driven by some Yankee awaits you. But the knife is for myself if you pollute me with your touch!"

"Bravo!" thrilled Hal. He was so near, so ready to spring upon the rascal, that he delayed a moment to see the finish of the drama.

"You would kill yourself?" exclaimed the Spanish officer.

"I wish to live—I have much to live for," protested the girl vehemently. "Yet I will say good-by to life sooner than feel the loathsome caress of your hand or lips."

"Come, come, now, spitfire," uttered the Spaniard. "I admire your spirit. It would be shameful for one so full of pluck to quit life so young."

"Then keep away from me, senor."

"Then, on the contrary," smiled the lieutenant, eyeing the girl with evil wistfulness, "I am thinking only of how I can get you without giving you a chance to first slay yourself."

Still glaring at him with the rage of an aroused tigress, Isabella slowly retreated, keeping her face all the while to the Spaniard.

"Time to act now," muttered Hal.

Gliding down the room on tip-toe, he came back with brisk, heavier step.

Those in the next room heard him. Passos, ashamed to be caught with a girl defying him, walked away from Isabella, pretending to be absorbed in his own thoughts.

"Senor," cried the girl, appealing to Hal, "may I appeal to you from this villain?"

But Hal only bowed to her with pretended coldness; then, turning to the lieutenant, he added:

"If I am not mistaken, I address Lieutenant Passos?"

"You do, senor," declared the officer, drawing himself up haughtily.

"I need a word with you, senor, if you will grant it."

"Do you not see that I am otherwise engaged, senor?" came the defiant answer.

But Hal, stepping close to him, whispered earnestly:

"It is a matter of life and death to you. Follow me, if you care for your safety."

Though the lieutenant put on a still more haughty look, he went in the track of our hero.

And Maynard led him toward the outer corridor, for he had resolved that the officer should not pass back to annoy the girl.

"You have a friend at the Prefatura?" whispered Hal, as soon as they were together in the next room.

It was a guessing shot, but the lieutenant answered "Yes."

"He is a true friend of yours," insisted Hal.

"I have always so considered him," replied the lieutenant. "But why all this questioning, senor?"

"I am at the end of my questions. I have only to add that your friend begged me to bring you a warning. It seems that you are in some trouble with the authorities."

"On the contrary, my standing is excellent," declared Passos, but nevertheless he turned pale.

"You are mistaken as to your standing," replied our hero. "Something has come to the ears of the authorities. What it is I do not even pretend to guess, but it is serious—in fact, it could not be more serious."

"What do you mean?" stammered the Spanish lieutenant.

"I mean, senor, that whatever you have done, or are suspected of doing, it has come to the wrong ears, and as a consequence you are condemned."

"Condemned?" faltered the Spaniard. "To servitude?"

"Worse."

"To be shot?"

"Hanged!"

Lieutenant Passos found it necessary to clutch at a chair to steady himself.

"You are jesting with me," he protested.

"On my honor as a Spaniard I am not," lied Hal, readily enough. "The decree is signed, and two of our men are now looking for you. You will be hanged in public to-morrow morning. There

will be no chance for appeal. You will do well to escape."

"Escape out of Havana?" cried the wretched man. "An officer so well known as I escape? Señor, you are mocking me!"

"I can say no more," came quickly from Hal. "I have told you all the news."

"My father will curse me," groaned the young officer. "I am the first of our family to become disgraced! Surely, with all the friends I command, there is some venue of escape—at least the sentence can be changed to shooting."

"There will be no change in the sentence," predicted Hal. "On the contrary, the authorities feel that they are determined to make an example of you. Any one who interferes in your behalf, no matter how influential, will be punished for it. If you apply to them, and they try to help you, you will but drag your friends down with you."

Lieutenant Passos heard with bloodless lips and twitching face. Suddenly he demanded:

"How do I know that you are qualified to bring such a message?"

"I came direct from the Prefatura," responded the boy. "More than that, I believe one of the two men sent out to tell you will soon be here."

Hal held up the card for the other's inspection. The lieutenant's last hope faded.

His eyes blazed into Hal's with a deadly light as he murmured, brokenly: "Señor, I see but one way to save my family from this disgrace—only one way to save my memory from being cursed by my own father. Fortunately I am prodded; it will not take me long. Accept sincere thanks for your service to me. And thank my friend at the Prefatura. You know whom."

Hal nodded. Then a grim look settled his face as he watched the wretched career hurry from the room.

Turning, finally, our hero went back to the señorita, Isabella.

"Pardon me, señorita, for my rudeness moment ago. It was only a ruse. I heard what that fellow said to you, and you are avenged."

"You have not hurt him?—killed him?"

"Indirectly, yes. I have given him some pretended news that will finish his career within five minutes. So every scoundrel deserves to perish who foully insults an innocent woman."

"You are going to fight him?" guessed the girl.

"No, I fight with men only. Lieutenant Passos has gone outside to blow out his own brains!"

Bang! Almost directly under the nearest window a shot rang out, causing both of the young people to jump.

Hal ran to the window, looked down into the yard, and saw the form of Passos lying upon the ground. Soldiers were bending to raise the officer, but he was already dead.

"You are avenged, señorita, and I cannot say that I am sorry for the part I took in it," murmured Hal huskily, as he came back to her side.

On the next day there were many in Havana who wondered why Lieutenant Passos, of good family and moderately rich, with no known troubles, should have blown out his brains.

"You were right, señorita," said our hero, "when you predicted that a bullet driven by some Yankee awaited him, since I caused him to commit suicide."

"And you are a Yankee?" whispered the thunderstruck Cuban girl, in a barely audible tone, while her large, awe-filled eyes gazed up into his own.

Too late, Hal saw that he had let the cat out of the bag.

"I shall keep your secret, señor," thrilled the girl. "No torture could wring it from me."

Hal, looking into her earnest eyes, believed her.

"I must leave you now, señorita, for I have much and perilous work to do."

"Then let me thank you, señor, from my heart, for relieving me from the most dastardly foe that a woman could have. If you only knew what persecution I have suffered from him!"

"She is far too lovely to be left alone in this city of infamy," growled Hal, as he made his way through the rooms in search of Blanco.

He came within sight of the captain-general at last. That official was seated at a table, and before him a young officer was holding a paper which the captain-general, after a glance, signed.

Hal had stepped behind a potted palm. The officer with the signed paper came past him, as Blanco rose and walked further on.

"He's mighty tickled, this young officer," mused Hal, noting the light in the Spaniard's eyes.

Then he saw something that caused him to gasp.

The young officer separated two sheets of paper, folding them separately.

"He held the two sheets of paper one under the other, and got Blanco to sign the wrong one?" divined the boy, drawing closer to the palm as the officer came nearer.

In a moment the officer was gone into the next room, leaving Hal staring, as if fascinated, at a bit of white paper that lay upon the floor where it had dropped from inside the officer's coat.

But only for a second did Hal wait. In the same instant he sprang forward, snatched up the paper and scanned it.

It was a blank sheet, save only for Blanco's official signature.

Uttering a cry of delight, he hastened back to find the senorita.

"Your brother's name?" demanded Maynard, eagerly.

"Andreas, senor."

"You will play a desperate game to save him?"

"I will give my life for him, senor."

Drawing out a fountain pen, Hal Maynard wrote hastily on the sheet he had picked up from the floor.

"Here, take this, and drive like lightning," he thrilled, pressing the paper into the girl's hands.

With eyes dilating with joy, the Cuban girl read:

"To the Commandante at Cabanas—Release at once Senor Andreas Varome. Let him go with his sister, who brings this to you. Remember that the senorita is under my protection."

(Signed) "Blanco,
"Captain-General."

CHAPTER IX.

"NO QUESTIONS ASKED."

"How did you manage to obtain this, senor?" whispered the delighted, radiant girl.

"By trickery, senorita. No part of it is genuine, save the signature. Now, listen to what I have to say, while I make a tracing of the signature."

As he adjusted a thin sheet of paper over Blanco's signature, Hal whispered, hurriedly:

"Get a driver, go to Cabanas, and show this paper. With your brother drive back here into the little street—I forget its name—which runs between O'Reilly and Obispo streets. Halt near the chapel, and remain in the carriage until you hear from me. If you see the captain-general's carriage awaiting near by, do not let its presence disturb you."

Over the traced signature of Havana's chief military officer Hal wrote these words:

"Allow the senorita and whomever may be with her to pass free and unquestioned in any direction."

"This second forged order, senorita, you will keep in your possession, merely showing it to any officer who halts you. Now, senorita, I may be sending you to your death, but believe me, I have planned as best I could."

"You Yankees are a gallant race," murmured the Cuban girl, tears of gratitude springing to her eyes.

"Adios, senorita. No—no thanks—no time for them. I'm off!"

And off Hal was, like a streak of lightning, threading the long suite of apartments until he reached the one where he had last seen the captain-general.

Blanco was not there now, but Hal noted doors leading into two other rooms.

At one of these doors stood an officer as if on guard.

Sauntering up close, Maynard looked in. He saw a small room, plainly furnished with only a large table and chairs.

"The council room, senor?" he asked at a guess, of the officer.

"How can that possibly concern you senor?"

"Does this explain?" Again Maynard exhibited his purloined credential card.

"Oh, certainly, Señor Calvo. Well, this is the council room."

"And is it expected that the council will begin soon?"

"In fifteen minutes, perhaps; or maybe, in half an hour."

"I am instructed to make an inspection of this and some of the other rooms."

"At General Blanco's order?" queried the Spaniard.

"At the order of the chief of police, but I presume the order is issued at the instance of his excellency."

"Obey your orders, señor," smiled the official, making way for our hero to pass.

Hal found himself in the council room.

There were other rooms beyond, but he made one fascinating discovery—there was a closet just back of the council table!

"If the gentleman at the door will only look the other way for one moment!" murmured Hal.

To his great delight the officer at that moment unconsciously complied.

Jerk! Hal was inside the closet, with the door pulled to.

"Now, bring on your council!" he whispered, exultantly.

But the Spaniard is the child of procrastination. An hour dragged by before the sound of feet in the room told Hal that more than one person had entered.

"Close the door, general," directed a voice.

Then, other voices sounded in general conversation. It was the council!

How Hal Maynard longed for just one peep at these generals of Spain!

But that would be dangerous—criminal, if it endangered him at this point in his desperate game of spying.

Besides, they were talking—talking over the plans of the campaign when the Yankees should come to attack Havana.

Plans that made Hal's eyes bulge! Plans that would be priceless to Uncle Sam, since these plans showed the scheme of campaign, and the only scheme possible in the conditions that Havana's defenses and resources were.

Plans involving a knowledge that could make it possible to save hundreds

of American lives that would otherwise be lost in the wresting of Cuba's capital from the grasp of the Spaniard!

It was dark in the closet, but Hal, note-book in hand, wrote as fast as he could. His scrawly writing covered page after page, and comprised all that the American commanders needed to know of Blanco's weak and strong points in fighting.

"This is priceless!" exulted the busily scribbling boy. "The biggest stroke of luck in the war! Oh—oh—oh, dear!"

Hal turned white as a sheet, trembling all over, for General Blanco's voice broke in:

"Colonel, hand the map out of the closet!"

Like a thunder-clap came the discovery.

Lieutenant Hal was caught in the very act of writing down Spanish secrets!

If he was dismayed as the book and pencil fell from his hands in the full glare of the light, he was not more dumfounded than the officers of the council when they beheld the unexpected apparition of the spy.

"Seize him!" thundered Captain-General Blanco.

Whish! As a few Cubans, machete in hand, dash through a startled Spanish column, and disappearing on the other side of the road, leaving behind a trail of dead and wounded Spaniards, so did Hal Maynard, after stooping to snatch up the note-book, make a dash through those who got in his way.

Striking right and left, he knocked down a couple of the generals, dashed through the nearest door, halted to slam himself against it, and quickly turned the key in the lock.

His previous inspection of the rooms told him what to do. He knew where to find a corridor that was little likely to be used.

Down this corridor he glided, found a staircase, and fairly flew down it.

Above, by this time, the palace was in an uproar.

Just ahead Hal caught sight of a rushing figure in uniform, just in time to abate his own speed.

"Some one has escaped!" shouted the Spanish officer, darting up to him. "Per-

EVERYONE, EXCEPT CRIMINALS, LIKE NICK CARTER.

haps it is you, señor. Wait until we find out!"

"On the contrary," retorted the boy, coolly, "I am of the secret police. I am glad you told me. I will hurry to notify the Prefatura."

And flashing up his card with all the assurance in the world, Hal wrenched himself out of the grasp of the excited officer, who, badly rattled, but burning to distinguish himself, turned and ran in another direction.

Hal waited for no more, but sped down the deserted back corridor, until he came to the rear door opposite the chapel.

Here, of course, there was a guard, but cheeky Hal was ready for it. His card came swiftly into view as he palpitated:

"A desperate character has escaped. I am hastening to telephone the Prefatura!"

"God speed you, señor!" bawled after him the sargento of the guard.

Other soldiers, loitering in the street, heard this encouraging hail. Hence it did not occur to them to offer to stop this bustling young man.

Hal's eyes roved the short street in both directions. The captain-general's conveyance waited before the door, but further down the street he perceived another carriage.

Toward this he darted, and, as he reached it, the door flew open.

"Jump in, señor, and God bless you!" exclaimed a manly voice, as a hand reached out, grasped his own, and fairly hauled him inside.

There was no need for these two young men to be introduced to each other, for opposite them sat, smiling radiantly, la Señorita Isabella Varome.

"You have saved me, señor," whispered the young Cuban. "Andreas Varome is your friend to the death. We——"

He was obliged to stop, for the driver was coming to the door for instructions.

"Drive down Cuba street as fast as your horses can travel," ordered Hal. "Miles covered are pesos earned tonight."

"Señor, there is trouble at the palace," hesitated the driver, pointing across the way. "I hope there is nothing wrong."

Isabella was ready with the forged order that Hal had furnished her.

Our hero struck a match so that the driver could read it.

"It is all right, señor," responded the jehu, with a new note of respect in his voice. "I see that you are people of consequence. You shall be obeyed."

And springing to his seat, the driver whipped up his horses.

They were quickly clear of the palace, though, as our hero had foreseen, it was not long before they were stopped by a patrol.

The forged order, however, quickly satisfied the officer in charge, who, after scanning the paper, remarked smilingly:

"We salute the señorita who is under General Blanco's protection. As he directs, no questions are to be asked. Proceed, driver."

Though stopped a dozen times, an exhibition of the order was always enough to take them past the most zealous guard.

So they passed through Havana, and out into the suburbs next to the Vedado, or beach on the west side of the entrance to the harbor.

Boom! sounded a gun across the water.

"It comes from La Cabanas!" groaned Andreas Varome, sinking back upon the cushion. "It notifies the city that a prisoner has escaped, and I am that prisoner!"

"The forgery of the order has been discovered," tearfully exclaimed Isabella.

"And therefore," came grimly from our hero, "we shall not succeed in passing the next guard who pokes his gun in our faces!"

CHAPTER X.

THE FORTINA'S REFUGEES.

Since the driver was far from being in their secret, they spoke in low tones.

"It looks badly," confided Hal, slowly "but——"

He paused.

"But——" urged Andreas.

"But——" came from Isabella.

"I am thinking."

Then, after a moment more he leaned out of the window to call:

"Muchacho!"

"Si, señor!" came from the box.

"Drive to the Bodega."

This, before the war was a famous resort, an inn, on the Vedado.

"It is deserted now, senor."

"Drive there."

"But—"

"Dog, do you think I belong to the police not to know my own business?"

"To the Bodega, then, senor!"

Turning his horses, the driver started with increased speed, stopping them, after a few moments, in the deserted yard of the abandoned inn.

"Leave us here, muchacho," directed Hal, slipping a gold coin to the delighted fellow.

"Shall I return?"

"Not for two days. I cannot name the hour now. Do not come for us, unless you will take the chance of our being ready to go back to Havana."

Doubtless the driver was curious to know the reason for this mysterious errand to a house in which nobody lived, but he had seen the peremptory order which he supposed General Blanco had issued, so it did not occur to the jehu to be suspicious.

"You are going to hide here, senor?" queried Andreas, when the driver had mounted his box and was driving slowly off.

"I am going to pretend to," muttered Hal. "Within a half an hour at the latest this driver will be telling some one where he left us."

"Where—"

"Listen. There is an American gun-boat somewhere off the coast along here. I have got to find her. Meanwhile, senor, you and your sister must be in a safe hiding place. What do you think of the old ruined fortina?"

"Excellent," cried Andreas. "No place could be better. Besides, it is so close to the sea that we could reach out and touch the water."

The fortina is the ruin of an old fort on the Vedado. In the last century it mounted many formidable guns, but when the English bombarded Havana, a few years before the War of the Revolution, they knocked so many and such big holes in the fortina that the Spaniards never found the energy to restore the ruin.

It lies perched upon the jagged shore of a high line of coral rocks, a picturesque thing of the past, the minarets at the four corners of the old ruin looking as if they pointed out to Heaven the decay of the once great Spanish empire.

On the shore side an old drawbridge still resists the assaults of time. Over this curious pleasure-seekers can pass into the fortina over a rock-bedded gully which, at high tide, is full enough to be a moat.

Over to the river, and thence along to this drawbridge, our hero piloted his friends with great stealth.

"Wait here a moment," whispered Hal, detaining them a hundred yards away from the draw. "It is barely possible that the Spanish soldiers are using the fortina as a place of observation."

Andreas and Isabella crouched down flat in the sand. Hal had gone twenty feet when a sound that reached his ears bought him to an alert halt.

Over the night breeze came the clanking of sabres to his ears.

"Pursuit, already," he quivered. "Cavalry, or maybe a squad of the orden publico."

It was no time for hesitation. Drawing his revolver he stole back to his Cuban friends.

"We can't wait. We'll have to take chances on the fortina being unoccupied," he communicated. "Senor, have you anything that would serve as a weapon?"

"Nothing."

"Take my pocketknife, then. It has a pointed blade, which is better than nothing."

"While I," murmured Isabella, who was as calm as either of them, "have the stiletto which I showed Lieutenant Passos."

"Forward," whispered Hal. "Bend low and run."

Panting, they reached the drawbridge, crossed it.

By this time the clanking of sabres was louder.

"They are searching the Bodega," announced Hal. "Had we lingered there we would have been prisoners by this time."

"I shall never be a prisoner," declared the senorita, her eyes flashing. "Senor,

if my knife fails me, I shall count upon you to shoot me down with one of your last cartridges. You have seen, to-night, that no woman should fall into the hands of Spaniards while death is left to her."

Shuddering with horror, Hal bowed.

A short search showed that there were no soldiers of Spain in the fortina. But they found something else that filled them with joy. It was the shaft of an old, disused well. The rope that still hung there to a windlass proved strong enough to permit them to descend.

Down there, at a depth of sixty feet below the yard of the fortina they found a pile of ancient debris—enough to hide under in case daylight should still find them there.

"Faugh!" protested Andreas, shudderingly, after poking about a little while in the rubbish, "I do not dare to look further for fear I shall unearth a pile of bleached bones. This is altogether too likely a spot to find the traces of many Spanish murders."

"I shall leave you now," whispered Lieutenant Maynard.

"You go to signal your gunboat?" questioned Andreas.

"Presently. But first I must have a look at the Santa Clara and Reina forts and sand batteries."

"You must go?" asked Isabella, her eyes luminous with sympathy, even in that pit of darkness.

"Duty," said Hal, crisply.

"But you will take the most excellent care of yourself?"

"Be sure of that," laughed the boy, coolly. "I have too many pointers for Uncle Sam to take any needless risks."

As he went hand over hand up the rope, Isabella whispered in her brother's ear:

"There is the truest heart that beats under an American coat."

"As true as any," assented Andreas, warmly, "but I believe there are thousand more like him up in the great United States."

Hal stopped but an instant at the drawbridge, only long enough to make sure that the jangling sabres were not coming nearer.

Assured of that, he stole out into the night.

The Santa Clara fort, and afterward La Reina, he gave close inspection. There were several sand batteries besides, to which he got near enough to note the number and calibre of the guns.

At times he was near enough to hear the sentinels talking as they met.

So many close calls during the eventful night had made Maynard reckless rather than careful. It was perhaps this very dash, which is sometimes better than caution, that now carried him close to the guards with impunity.

Twice he found himself within close reach of the pursuing horsemen, who were scouring the beach and questioning all the sentinels.

One of these times, burrowing deep in the sand, Hal lay close enough to the nearest flank of riders to make out the bedraggled uniforms of the orden publico.

After they had passed, our hero stole to the rocks in front of the fortina.

Hiding here in a cleft between the rocks, he produced a small tube from his pocket.

Lighting the fuse at one end, Hal Maynard held it so that the red light that suddenly flared up could be seen from the sea.

Before thirty seconds had passed, a short, shrill blast from a siren whistle answered.

"The Racer's just where she belongs," muttered Hal, joyfully.

He held the red light in sight until a second blast of the whistle announced that his bearing had been fully located, and that a boat was on its way to the shore.

"Most likely the orden publico will ride down to see what the whistling means," conjectured Hal. "Hope they do!"

He extinguished his light now, waiting and listening, until a peculiar splash in the water just underneath the rocks showed where the boat lay.

"Ss-s-s-sst!" With this low signal, Hal began to clamber down the rocks.

Standing in the bow of the waiting boat was a figure with outstretched hand, and Hal's grasp quickly met Juan's.

"All ready to pull off?" whispered Ensign Gilroy from the stern-sheets.

"Almost," whispered Hal. "There are a couple of Cuban refugees I want to take on board. Let me have some of your men, ensign, and I'll go back for them."

"I've only four; take bow oar and next one to him."

"And I'll go too," declared Juan, springing across to the nearest rock.

Hal led the way speedily. In a very short time Andreas and his sister were out of the well, out of the fort, and climbing across the rocks.

The jangling sabres were near again, but now our friends paid little heed until a voice bellowed through the darkness:

"Carrajo! These must be the ones we seek!"

With a wild yell the men of the orden publico dashed forward, preparing to spring from their horses.

But Hal merely fired one shot in their direction.

Instantly afterward the Racer's searchlight swept that part of the shore. A shell exploded in the midst of the pursuers, following which came the rattling barking of a machine gun, sending the bullets pelting against the rocks.

Defended by such a fire, Ensign Gilroy took his time in pulling out.

A few moments later all were aboard the gunboat, Hal having brought with him all the information he went ashore for, and three times as much more besides.

As the gunboat slowly got under way, our hero, standing on the deck, heard a sentinel's whining call on the shore:

"Aler-ta, numero dos!"

"Yes!" grinned Hal. "You fellows are peaches for alertness!"

The Racer turned her prow northward, leaving her passengers at Key West, whence the steamship Mascotte bore them up to Tampa.

Hal's information proved invaluable to the Government.

From the Secretary of War he received an intimation that his nomination for promotion to first lieutenant would be sent to the Senate.

But best of all Hal appreciated the nickname given him by some of his comrades at General Shafter's headquarters.

They called him "Old Glory," as a true son of the flag.

It was not the last that Hal saw of Andreas Varome and his beautiful sister.

But Hal's thoughts were quickly back at the front again.

He got there in the flesh, too, for General Shafter's first invasion of Cuba was on the eve of starting.

[THE END.]

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